COMPETITION PLANS FOR BATHS AND WASH-HOUSES.

It gives us much pleasure to relate that the various plans submitted in competition to the committee for obtaining baths and wash-houses for the labouring poor, were exhibited to parties more especially interested in them on Wednesday and Thursday last, and that arrangements are in progress for the further exhibition of them to the public. The committee have acted most wisely in ultimately coming to this determination, notwithstanding they had previously resolved that the plans should not be seen, and deserve the best thanks of all who desire that architectural competitions should be well and honestly conducted. It is so seldom that committees will retrace a step once taken, however wrong the direction may be, that this praiseworthy exception should not pass unnoticed.

The designs exhibited are twenty-one in number, from eighteen competitors, and are developed in 137 drawings; twenty-two sets were submitted; but one competitor refused to allow his drawings to be seen, and withdrew them. Of course this gentleman will not think of examining the drawings that *are* exhibited.

The names of the competitors in the order in which the plans are hung are as follows, together with the estimated cost of carrying out their designs:—

1. George Truefitt	£10,000
2. Wigg and Pownall	13,207
3. J. H. Taylor and Son	14,000
4. P. Prichard Baly	11,700
5. Cope and Eales	20,000
6. Arthur Mee	
7. John Tarring	9,963
8. Charles Parker	16,500
9. Lee and Burnett	12,974
10. Savage and Foden	9,272
11. Scott and Moffatt	11,778
12. William Brooks and Son	10,125
13. Garland and Christopher	10,000
14. Owen Jones	16,000
15. John Barnett	9,915
16. Sylvester and Miles	8,487
17. F. J. Francis	6,800
18. James Harris	12,540

Thus ranging in amount from 6,800*l.* to 20,000*l.*

Nos. 9, 12, and 14 have each two sets.

Feeling, after a general examination of the plans, how difficult it was to estimate properly their relative merits without very long and careful examination, we took some pains to learn the course which had been pursued by the sub-committee to whom they were referred. We were informed that they met daily eighteen or nineteen times, and examined every plan in relation with a series of what they thought the most important points to be considered. The extent of agreement or otherwise, of each design with these various requisites was then registered in a very ingenious table, which, when the examination was completed, presented at one view the merits and demerits of the different plans, and enabled the committee to weigh one against the other.

The first and most important deduction said to have been made was, that *not one of the designs agreed in all respects with the published instructions*. No. 1, for example (which is nicely drawn, by the way), is on a smaller *scale* than was required, while one near it, although on the proper scale, occupies considerably more area than was prescribed, and so on, through the whole twenty-two. The selected design, No. 4, by Mr. Baly, is in several respects at variance with the instructions, so that to justify the choice, the first assertion must be admitted.

We are not disposed at this moment to doubt it, but reserve to ourselves the right of expressing an opinion when we have examined the drawings more fully. Mr. Baly has given much consideration to the subject, and has produced an elaborate set of drawings, sixteen in number, entitled to great commendation. Every part of the design is fully explained, and in none, so far as we could see, are the arrangements for ventilation, and for economically carrying on the business of the institution, more perfect. The plan is square, with a high tower in the centre, used chiefly for the supply of fresh air and the removal of that which is vitiated. The area occupied is 11,600 feet, for which the estimate, accidentally of course, is 1*l.* per foot. The elevation is plain, but appropriate; and here it may be remarked, that architectural effect has not been aimed at in the designs generally; nevertheless, some of them display considerable skill.

Next to the selected design, No. 8 (Mr. Parker's) is perhaps the most elaborately worked out (consisting of twelve drawings), and has many points of excellence. No. 3 and No. 9 are both clever designs; but we may not pretend to particularize without a fuller examination than we have yet given.

Our thanks are due to Mr. Stonhouse Griffith, the secretary, for the manner in which he answered inquiries.

THE THAMES AND ITS EMBANKMENTS;

WITH REMARKS ON THE MOTION AND ACTION OF RUNNING WATER.

BY JOHN PHILLIPS.

On entering the valley of the Thames from the sea, and tracing its winding course upwards, it appears that there is not a situation upon its banks that offers a more salubrious, extensive, and commodious position for a town, than the locality where the city of London is situated: therefore the selection of the spot whereon this great city is erected was eminently judicious. The proximity of its situation to the deep, wide, and magnificent river flowing before it, and from which its natural surface has an easy and convenient elevation; with the wide expanse and undulation of the country to the north of the city, renders this peculiarity of position the most favourable for a number of human beings to congregate together in community. Historians tell us that for a considerable period antecedent to the invasion of Britain by the Romans this site was covered with the rude huts of the ancient Britons; indeed, that such was the case there can be but little doubt, as its peculiar and favourable position, and also its natural facilities, made it a conspicuous and easy landing-place from the river, which, at the same time, presented an excellent and safe anchorage for the numerous craft frequenting its shores. After the subjugation of the Britons by the Romans, the wisdom and good taste of the latter were peculiarly exemplified in their retaining this spot for a station, and for the purpose of building their residences. The Roman domination in Britain lasted somewhere about 476 years, and during their occupancy of the city of London, they greatly improved its situation, the extent and limits of which were more clearly defined by the wall they built around it, the remains of which are in existence to the present day.

Antecedent to the occupation of London by the Romans, very many and vastly extended tracts of land contiguous to it were inundated by the flowing and rising of the tide up the Thames, thus forcing and ponding back the river waters. There is no doubt that considerable portions of the surface of the ground, on the south side of the river from Wandsworth to Woolwich, belted by the Surrey and Kent hills, and also a great portion of the lower part of Westminster, extending beyond Fulham, as well as the whole of the surface of the present broad meadows opposite Woolwich, stretching from the river Lea eastward up to the Essex hills, were entirely inundated during the times of the high-water of the spring-tides; and from the elevated position of London, the whole expanse, looking towards Wandsworth, and to beyond Woolwich, appeared as an extensive lake, and London a promontory jutting out from the main land. Maitland, in his "History of London," says that "the greatest marshes on the south side of the river Thames, before the embanking of the said river, reached from Wandsworth in the west to Woolwich in the east." Pennant also says that "all the land round Westminster Abbey was a flat fen, which continued beyond Fulham;" and "the Surrey side was, in all probability, a great expanse of water or lake;" and that "the expanse of water might have filled the space between the rising grounds at Deptford and those at Clapham, and been bounded to the south by the beautiful Surrey hills." These appearances would most certainly indicate that the valley of the Thames was anciently an arm of the sea, and thus presented more the appearance of an extensive estuary than that of a river. The surface-soil of the lower part of Westminster, the Isle of Dogs, and the Essex marshes, on the north bank of the river, and the whole of the extensive marsh-land, upon which Battersea, Lambeth, Southwark, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, and Deptford are standing, on the south bank of the river, is composed of alluvial matter, brought down by the river Thames, and the many collateral and subsidiary streams and water-courses flowing into it; and the alluvium, held in suspension and driven along by these waters, was deposited, in consequence of being spread over these spaces by the flowing of the tides.

By what race of inhabitants, or at what period of time these extensive tracts of prolific marshland were acquired history does not inform us. That they were gained during an age of very remote antiquity is evident, from the fact of no mention having been made by any one in reference to it; neither do our authentic records reach back so far, or throw any light whatever upon the subject. It is not probable that the construction of the embankments which were thrown up at the edges of these marshes were the works of either the ancient Britons, or of the Saxons who succeeded them. The former could not, by any possibility, have produced a work of this magnitude, bearing evidence of advancement to so high a state of civilization, as they were a people at once ignorant, barbarous, and not in any way conversant with the mechanical arts of a civil state; and although the latter were somewhat farther advanced in the scale of civilization, yet they had not the talents and skill to invent, much more the tact to direct and carry out, these stupendous constructions. It would appear, therefore, but just to attribute the embankment of the Thames to the east and west of London, to the Romans.* The well-known enterprising character of that people, their great discipline, industry, and thorough knowledge of the arts and sciences, as evidenced by the remains of all their works, point to them as the authors of these great and noble constructions. In fact, there is no doubt that the reclaiming of these extensive marshes on both sides of the Thames, by embankments, pretty nearly in the state we now see them, and by these means as well, producing something like an uniformity and regimen to the river, were effected by the superior knowledge and talents of the Roman legions, to whose perseverance and proficiency in the science of civil engineering at that time we are indebted for these great and admirable works. The historian Tacitus, who very probably was in England at the time, affirms that the Britons were employed by them "*in sylvis et paludibus emuniendis, i.e.* in clearing the woods and banking the fens;"† and that while thus engaged they frequently complained of the great toil and extreme severity of the labour of such works.

From time immemorial the preservation and reparation of the Thames embankments, as well as of all others throughout the realm of England, was considered of the utmost importance, and in consequence their defence was strictly enjoined. Nevertheless, the extensive marsh, pasturable, and arable lands, and other low grounds adjacent to these embankments and rivers, "heretofore through politic wisdom won and made profitable for the great commonwealth of the realm," from the flowing, reflowing, and violence of the tides, and from the neglect of those whose duty it was to have maintained and repaired them, were occasionally very disrupt, and allowed to fall to decay. The first mention of any thing in reference to this subject occurs in **Magna Charta. The Great Charter**, A.D., 1225, 9th Henry III., wherein, amongst other things, it is ordained that no person should be called upon "to make bridges nor banks, but such as of old time and of right have been accustomed to make them in the time of King *Henry*, our grandfather;" and that from henceforth "no banks shall be defended but such as were in defence in the time of King *Henry*, our grandfather, by the same places and the

* "That it was therefore a work of the Romans, whilst they were masters here, as it is the opinion of some learned men, so do I make thereof no doubt, considering to what a height, not in learning, but in divers arts and sciences that people were arrived, as by sundry testimonies we plainly find. Besides, it is not only evident, from the credit of our best historians, that their several colonies, dispersed throughout this nation, were so excellently disciplined, that for avoiding the mischiefs which idleness produces, they were always exercised in some fit and necessary employments, as those great and public ways, and other stupendous works, made and raised by their skill and industry, do sufficiently shew."—DUGDALE, *History of Imbanking and Draining*, 2nd edit. 1772, chap. xi. page 16.

† Ibid.

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